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AUTHOR Levine, Daniel U.; Fain, Robert P.
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ABSTRACT

The purposes of the project reported in this study were to prepare a brochure showing that the quality of education was still as high as it had been before change in the community had led parents and other citizens to worry whether children were receiving a good education in local schools, and to distribute the brochure on a mass basis and determine if it had any effect on public opinion concerning local schools on the Southeast Side of Kansas City. The brochure described in a clear and candid fashion the educational opportunities available to students in the community's school and data concerning student performance in the classroom. It also acquainted the reader with community organizations which were functioning in the community, and through which citizens could participate in community affairs. With the help of community organizations, thousands of the brochures were distributed free on a door-to-door basis and thus were placed in the homes of a majority of families on the Southeast Side. Despite complicating problems in interpretation, the results of the study evaluating the effect of the brochures on a pre-post basis offer definite encouragement regarding the potential of such programs. (Authors/JM)

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PUBLIC REACTIONS TO A BROCHURE AIMED AT MAINTAINING CONFIDENCE IN THE SCHOOLS OF A RACIALLY CHANGING URBAN COMMUNITY

Daniel U. Levine and Robert P. Fain

Introduction

There is much reason to believe that middle class parents make decisions on where to live at least partly in terms of the quality of the schools available to their children. Although attractions such as stylish homes with convenience features, room for children to play, access to people with similar outlook and aspirations, employment opportunities, and visceral feelings about neighbors' life styles also play a part, perceptions of the quality of local schools constitute a powerful factor influencing the residential choices of middle-class families.

Since the attraction of effective schools is a critical element in retaining middle-class families in an urban neighborhood, a campaign to inform a community about the effectiveness of its schools (providing they are effective) may be an essential tactic in a strategy for achieving balance and stability in a community which, due to other factors, is in a state of flux and transition. The project reported in this paper constituted an attempt to conduct such a campaign on a fairly large scale.

Community Setting

The Southeast area of Kansas City is in part a product and in part a beneficiary of the City Beautiful movement of the early twentieth century and the benevolent activities of Colonel Thomas H. Swope, who donated a vast expanse of land to the city for a recreational park and zoological garden. Three lovely boulevards of the city's renowned boulevard system meander North and South through Southeast Kansas City. Three more move gracefully East and West. Substantial and expensive homes were constructed along the wide, usually divided and landscaped thoroughfares. The towering elms chosen by William Rockhill Nelson to line the streets and boulevards of the city provided a dimension of beauty and grace for the residents of the area, and several fountains and botanical displays were located strategically along the routes to provide an aura of elegance seldom found elsewhere.

In 1938 Southeast High School was built at the convergence of two of the boulevards. The convergence was essentially the terminus of each, a geographical situation that was treated as an artistic opportunity. A bountiful fountain was placed so as to erupt into a broad plaza of gardens and welcome visitors through the entrance to Swope Park. The school itself incorporated within its structure a soaring bell tower from which one could survey all the splendor which was its setting.

By 1960, although large sections of the area continued to be well maintained, many of the large old homes along the routes to Southeast were beginning to show their age and some had become dilapidated. Some of the unimproved land remaining from the early period of growth was marred by post World War II low-price tract houses. The city limits had moved far beyond the Southeast High attendance area, and the noise and bustle of the city were encroaching upon the area. A totally white, middle class population was beginning to be replaced by many middle-class and some lower-income black families. This population movement was partially forced by the pressure of a large in-migration of black workers and families into Kansas City in the 1940's and 1950's. But it was also boosted by the rather sudden availability of large old

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homes and cheap newer homes in an area increasingly losing desirability to white purchasers. Once the community was opened to Negroes, the process of racial and economic change was abetted by real estate practices which accelerated turnover and fear in the community.

The effect on the student composition of the schools of the area was dramatic. In some cases the racial composition of a school changed substantially almost over night. Table 1 shows the rapid change which occurred in the racial composition of most of the area's nine elementary schools and in its junior and senior high schools.

TABLE 1

Estimated Racial Composition of Nine Southeast Side Elementary Schools, 1955-1969*

Year	Estimated Enrollment	Estimated Number of Black Students	Estimated Percentage of Black Students
1955	4500	200	.04
1959	4600	300	.07
1963	4800	1000	.21
1967	5300	2600	.49
1969	5500	3700	.67

*Estimates are based on individual school estimates in Kansas City, Missouri Public Schools reports without actual enrollment figures.

It is questionable, however, whether the quality of education was any different in 1967 or 1968 than it had been in 1959 or 1960. A substantial number of residents who chose to resist the panic still remained in the community in 1968, thus providind a base of stability for the schools. In addition, many if not most of the new black families in the area were middle-class or middle-class-aspiring families in which stress is placed on achievement, promptness, completion of tasks, and other values which tend to contribute to success in school. Taking these factors into consideration it seemed entirely reasonable to believe that the Southeast community of Kansas City provided a suitable setting in which to conduct a campaign publicizing the strength and effectiveness of the schools in order to control rapid racial and economic transition which might quickly turn the community into another low-income ghetto.

In brief, the purposes of the project were to prepare a brochure showing that the quality of education was still as high as it had been before change in the community had led parents and other citizens to worry whether children were receiving a good education in local schools, and to distribute the brochure on a mass basis and determine if it had any effect on public opinion concerning local schools on the Southeast Side.

Assessing and Portraying the Quality of Education

Of central importance to the study was the requirement to devise a workable measure of school quality that would form the basis for a publication readable by a generally lay audience. We decided to use two approaches to portray the quality of schools on the Southeast

Side in our brochure. The first cited features and innovations in local school programs most of which could be easily observed by patrons of the district. Several notable examples of district effort were cited as one measure of quality. Among these were a one-of-a-kind course in Humanities developed and presented at the high school in co-operation with the University of Missouri - Kansas City, an in-service training workshop for junior and senior high teachers funded through Title I of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and offered through the combined efforts of the Kansas City, Missouri Public Schools and UMKC, the availability of reading clinics in several of the schools, opportunities to acquire vocational and technical skills in the schools, and the availability of community-wide services such as the public library located in the high school.

The second approach presented data from aptitude and achievement tests which provided measures of student performance. Data on student performance were compiled from test scores of students in selected schools in 1964, and students from the same schools in 1967. The measures used were percentile ranks on the Lorge-Thorndike I. Q. test, and tests of reading aptitude. Third grade students were selected for comparison. The test data were assembled by the staff of the Department of Educational Testing of the Kansas City School District.

These data were eventually reduced to three histograms shown in Figures 1 through 3. The first presented the Q2 and Q3 performance levels (see the tables for a definition of these terms) on the Lorge-Thorndike for the 1964 and 1967 samples, the second presented the same information on reading achievement for the years 1964 and 1967, and the third chart showed a comparison based on data from the two previous charts. These histograms indicated that the relative effectiveness of the Southeast schools had not declined between 1964 and 1967.

The results of our analysis were in line with existing research concerning the relation between social-class and aptitude or ability. The composition of the Southeast community had changed from a predominantly-white middle-class area to a mixed black-and-white, middle-class and working-class area. More residents were economically disadvantaged in 1967 than in 1964. The consequent and expected result of this change was manifested in a decline in ability scores for third graders between 1964 and 1967. Since, to a large extent, the same life-style factors (including lack of the experiences measured by ability tests) which are associated with lower ability scores also effect scores on achievement tests, 1967 third graders suffered by comparison to '64 third graders on achievement. From what is known concerning the effects of social class on tests of academic aptitude, it was expected that scores in this area for the latter third grade would be lower, and they were. However, regardless of the relative advantages or disadvantages a child brings with him to school, what goes on in the school should have some bearing on his academic performance. How much influence is difficult to say, but one way to look at the problem is to compare so-called ability scores with achievement scores over a given amount of time, to determine whether children in a particular school or district are achieving "up-to-ability" and how well the school or district sustains this rate of achievement. It was encouraging to note that among the schools included in the study, our data clearly indicated that in terms of median performance, third grade students in 1967 were achieving at a level closer to what might be expected from their ability scores than the 1964 third graders at the same level. And when we compared reading achievement to ability for the relatively high achieving students at the Q3 level

we found the 1967 students were achieving not only relatively better than the 1964 students but even beyond what might be expected from their scores on the ability tests. These data were the major basis for our conclusions that schools on the Southeast side still were providing as effective an education for their pupils in 1967 as they had been in 1964.

The brochure

The procedure just outlined gave us easy-to-report evidence that the effectiveness of schools on the Southeast side had not declined. We felt confident that the schools in the community were making an effort to maintain educational opportunities at least as good as they had offered when they were populated by somewhat more homogeneous middle-class patrons. In the latter half of the 1960's a number of new programs had been started and some additional services had been added in schools on the Southeast Side; thus if educational quality is defined in terms of opportunities available in the school, one can make a good case for the proposition that educational quality had improved rather than declined during the period of most rapid racial and social change in the population of the schools. The perfromance of the students indicated they were benefiting from these efforts. To communicate this information to the school patrons and community as a whole, we developed and printed a commercial-quality brochure complete with artwork and pictures with accompanying text. The brochure described in a clear and candid fashion the educational opportunities available to students in the community's schools and the evidence described above concerning student performance in the classroom. It also acquainted the reader with community organizations which were functioning in the community and through which citizens of the area could participate in community affairs. With the help of community organizations, thousands of the brochures were distributed free on a door-to-door basis and thus were placed in the homes of a majority of families on the Southeast side.

Evaluation

The first step in assessing the potential impact of the brochure was to devise an interview schedule and conduct interviews with residents before distributing it. An interview schedule was developed whichincluded rating scales on items concerned with perception of local school quality; school effort; satisfaction with school; staff concern; and house type. We also took data on each respondent concerning age; race; sex; number of children in school and length of time at present address and in the community.

The interviews were conducted by one team of interviewers about three months before the brochures were distributed. To determine whether the brochures had a discernible impact on public opinion toward education on the Southeast side, another team of interviewers conducted post-distribution interviews three months after the brochures were distributed.[1] The post-distribution interview schedule was identical to the

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[1] Interviewers were University of Missouri - Kansas City graduate students who were able to accept temporary employment at the time interviews were to be conducted. They were recruited from among the friends and classmates of research assistants in the Center for the Study of Metropolitan Problems in Education. Training sessions provided standard instructions for each team of interviewers. There was no reason to believe that any systematic bias was introduced in this study due to the differing composition of the interview teams.

predistribution schedule, except that space was added for the interviewer to record whether and what kinds of references interviewees made to the brochure.[2] Each team spent a brief trial period in the field developing some consistency in conducting the interviews.

Pre-distribution interviews were conducted by interviewers who went to each of the nine elementary schools on the Southeast Side and began by interviewing a respondent who lived across from the school. After the first interview, an interviewer skipped several residences before attempting to interview another respondent. If no one was home, or in the very few cases in which a potential respondent refused to be interviewed, the interviewer went to the next house. Because only a few potential respondents refused to cooperate, we believe that the pre-distribution sample we obtained in this manner provided a good cross-section of the Southeast Community.

Post-distribution interviews were conducted approximately three months after the brochure was left at homes, businesses, and selected public places throughout the Southeast Side. Respondents in the second sample were not the same individuals who constituted the first sample. Because brochures had not been distributed to every home in the community, post-distribution interviews were conducted only within the five elementary school attendance areas where distribution had been nearly universal. This approach was determined to be permissible inasmuch as visual inspection of the data indicated that respondents in the pre-distribution sample who lived within the five attendance areas in which post-distribution interviews were conducted did not appear to differ in their attitudes toward local education from pre-distribution respondents in the full nine-attendance-area sample.

Analysis and Results

As described above, the primary purpose of this evaluation study was to determine whether attitudes toward public education of residents of the Southeast side were more favorable after our brochure describing the quality of public schools in the community had been distributed than they had been before. To this end, 193 usable pre-test interviews were conducted before distribution of the brochure and 103 usable post-test interviews were conducted three months after it had been distributed to residents of the community.

Background variables and response patterns

Before we could carry out pre-post comparisons we had to determine whether background characteristics of the persons interviewed were associated with attitudes toward the local schools and thus would have to be controlled or otherwise taken into account in assessing the data from the interviews. For example, if black residents initially had more positive attitudes toward the schools than did white residents, pre-post comparisons might be misleading if they were based on mixtures of respondents which differed by race. That is, if black residents were more positive than white residents and our pre-distribution sample contained a lower proportion of black residents than our post-distribution sample, the latter interviews would show an increase in favorable attitudes which might be attributed to differences in race rather than to the effects of our brochure.

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[2] A copy of the post-distribution interview schedule is provided in Appendix A.

TABLE 2

Pre- and Post-Mean Scores of White and Black Parents on Four Attitude Measures Dealing with Local Public Education

Group	Attitude Measure			
	Quality	Effort	Satisfaction	Concern
Pre-distribution black parents (N = 46)	4.52	2.38	1.93	2.03
Post-distribution black parents (N = 18)	4.78	2.33	2.06	2.00
Pre-distribution white parents (N = 26)	4.59	3.33	2.54	2.07
Post-distribution white parents (N = 15)	4.15	1.62	2.07	1.38
F Scores*				
Race	.37	5.91**	4.61**	.50
Time	.02	5.10**	.04	.95
Interaction	.07	13.70***	.90	1.96

*Because several respondents did not respond to every item, the N's on which F scores have been computed vary slightly from one variable to another.

**p <.05

***p <.01

TABLE 3

Pre- and Post-Mean Scores of White and Black Non-Parents on Two Attitude Measures Dealing with Local Public Education

Group	Attitude Measure: Quality	Attitude Measure: Effort
Pre-distribution black non-parents (N = 34)	4.48	2.44
Post-distribution black non-parents (N = 12)	3.90	3.25
Pre-distribution white non-parents (N = 87)	4.75	2.48
Post-distribution white non-parents (N = 58)	5.04	2.69
F Scores*		
Race	2.26	.04
Time	.08	.00
Interaction	1.24	3.73

*Because several respondents did not respond to every item, the N's on which F scores have been computed vary slightly from one variable to another.

Accordingly, statistical tests were made within the pre-distribution sample to determine whether the independent variables of race, parental status (parent vs. non-parent of children currently in the public schools), and (among parents) grade level of child in the schools were associated with differences in attitudes on the four dependent variables measuring attitudes toward the local public schools.[3] The four dependent variables were satisfaction with local schools as measured by the item, "On the whole are you satisfied with the education your children are receiving in the public schools?", perceptions of the quality of local schools as measured by the item, "How would you rate the quality of the public schools on the Southeast side?"; perceptions of the adequacy of the effort made by local schools as measured by the item, "From what you have seen, would you agree that the schools are doing as much as they possibly can to provide a good education for the children here?"; and perceptions of the concern with citizen opinion shown by local educators as measured by the item, "Do you think that teachers and other school officials on the Southeast side are very much concerned with the thinking and feeling of parents in the area?". Response categories which were used with these items are shown in the pos-distribution interview schedule in Appendix A.

Comparisons between black parents who had children in the upper grades and black parents with children in the lower grades and between white parents with children in the upper grades and white parents with children in the lower grades indicated that the two groups of black parents did not differ from each other and the two groups of white parents did not differ from each other on the four dependent variables.[4] Therefore it was concluded that grade level of children in the public schools was not associated with attitudes toward local public schools in our pre-distribution sample of parents.

Comparisons between black parents and black non-parents and between white parents and non-parents on the two dependent variables of quality and effort[5] indicated that within each racial group parents' attitudes toward local schools were not significantly different than the attitudes of non-parents. Therefore it was concluded that having or not having children in the public schools was not consistently associated with attitudes toward local public schools in our pre-distribution sample of residents of the Southeast side.

To assess the possible relationship between race and attitudes toward local schools, comparisons next were made between black parents and white parents and between black non-parents and white non-parents on the four dependent variables. TThe first set of comparisons showed that black and white parents did not differ in their perceptions of the quality of local schools and of the degree to which local educators were concerned with the thinking and feelings of parents in the community.[6] However, black

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[3] We considered testing for differences associated with age of respondents, but decided this was unnecessary because age was so closely associated with parental-non-parental status and because visual inspection of the data clearly indicated that there were no differences between older and younger black respondents or between older and younger white respondents.

[4] The largest F ratio in these eight comparisons was 2.5422 with 3 and 20 df.

[5] The reason why these groups were compared on only two variables is explained below.

[6] Due to the small numbers of respondents in the cells created by this breakdown, a non-parametric test - the Mann Whitney U test was used to test for the significance of differences in this part of the study.

parents were more satisfied with local schools and more pleased with the level of effort being expended by local educators than were white parents. The second set of comparisons showed that black non-parents and white non-parents did not differ on perceptions of the quality of local schools or in perceptions of the level of effort being expended by local educators. (Because they did not have children in school, non-parents who were interviewed were not asked to respond to the items dealing with satisfaction with children's education and with whether local educators were sensitive to parental opinion.)

In view of the finding that parents of upper grade and lower grade students within each racial group did not differ in their attitudes toward local public education but that black parents were different from white parents on two of the four attitude variables, we decided to combine the responses of parents with older and younger children within each racial group but to separate the responses of white and black parents and non-parents in making pre-post comparisons to assess the impact of the brochure we had prepared and distributed in the Southeast community.

General level of responses for the pre-distribution sample

Because differing numbers of response categories were used with the four interview items described above, each item must be considered individually in delineating the general level of response among the pre-distribution sample as a whole or the four sub-groups of which it is comprised. For each set of response categories, a low score represented more favorable attitudes toward the schools.

Five response categories scored from 1 to 5 were used with the satisfaction item. The mean score for the 72 pre-distribution parents who were asked to respond to this item was 2.12, well below the scale mid-point of 3. As shown in Table 2, neither the white nor the black parents had mean scores approaching the mid-point. The overall mean of 2.12 corresponds most closely to the "Mostly satisfied" response category.

Nine response categories scored from 1 to 9 were used with the quality item. The mean score for the 161 pre-distribution respondents on this item was 4.61, slightly below the scale mid-point of 5. As shown in Tables 2 and 3, only one of the eight sub-samples (post-distribution white non-parents) was above the mid-point, and only one (post-distribution black non-parent) was more than one full interval below it.

The overall mean of 4.61 and the relatively narrow spread in means among the sub-samples indicates that respondents in our study were inclined to be slightly more favorable than unfavorable in rating the quality of their public schools.

Six response categories scored from 1 to 6 were used with the effort item. The mean score for the 193 pre-distribution respondents who responded to this item was 2.56, well below the mid-point of 3.5 on the scale. As shown in Tables 2 and 3, only two of the sub-samples - post-distribution white non-parents and pre-distribution white parents - had mean scores approaching the mid-point. The overall mean of 2.56 is about half-way between the "Mostly agree" and the "Agree some" response categories. This finding suggests that with the exception of the two groups designated above, residents of the Southeast side tend to believe that local educators are working hard to provide good education.

Five response categories scored from 1 to 5 were used with the concern item. The mean score for the 62 pre-distribution parents who were asked to respond to this item was 2.04, well below the scale mid-point of 3.0. As shown in Table 2, neither the white

nor the black parents had mean scores approaching this mid-point, and the post-distribution white parents had a mean score well below it. The overall mean of 2.04 corresponds closely to the "Most of the time" response category. This finding together with the relatively narrow spread among sub-sample mean scores suggests that residents of the Southeast side generally believe local educators are sincerely concerned with the thinking and feeling of parents in the area. The low mean of the post-distribution white parents suggests that something may have occurred between the two interviews which led white parents to believe that local educators were more concerned with parents' attitudes than they had been before. That "something," of course, may have been the brochure.

In general, these findings indicate that though residents of the Southeast side tend to believe educators are making a sincere effort to provide good education and are concerned with the desires and feelings of their patrons, at the same time residents tend to be only slightly more favorable than unfavorable concerning the quality of education available at the time we conducted interviews. The meaning of the exceptions to these general patterns will be further considered in later sections of this paper.

Pre-post comparisons for parents

Table 2 shows the mean scores of the four groups of parents (black parents pre-distribution; black parents post-distribution; white parents pre-distribution; white parents post-distribution) on the four measures of attitudes toward local public education. For each attitude measure, a low score represents an attitude favorable toward the schools (e.g., agreement with the statement that "the schools are doing as much as they possibly can to provide a good education for the children here") and a high score represents dissatisfaction with or unfavorable viewpoints toward the local schools (e.g., a score toward the "very poor" end of the ten-point scale respondents were asked to use in rating the quality of local public schools).

Inspection of the data shown in Table 2 indicates, as noted above, that black parents in the pre-distribution sample were more satisfied with local schools and more pleased with the level of effort being expended by local educators than were white parents in the pre-distribution sample. Two of our major concerns in the pre-post distribution analysis, therefore, were to determine whether white parents in the post-distribution were more positive on these two variables than were white parents in the pre-distribution sample, and whether black parents in the post-distribution sample were at least as favorable or even more favorable on the two variables than were pre-distribution black parents. In addition, of course, we were also interested in determining whether th pre- and post-distribution samples differed in attitudes on the remaining two variables (quality and concern) as well.

With respect to the variables satisfaction and effort, Table 2 shows that there was a dramatic increase in positive perceptions of the effort being expended in local schools and a sizable increase in satisfaction with local schools in the white parents post-distribution sample as compared with the white parents pre-distribution sample. The data also suggest that white parents in the post-distribution sample may be more positive on concern than white parents in the pre-distribution sample. The scores of black parents in the post-distribution sample did not differ appreciably from the scores of black parents in the pre-distribution sample on any of the four variables.

To determine whether trends shown in Table 2 were statistically significant, regression analysis was used to test for differences between mean scores among groups. Because the cell sizes were not equal, main effects were tested as first-order, standardized,

partial regression coefficients, and interaction effects were tested as second-order, partial regression coefficients.[7] F ratios derived from these computations showed that race, time (pre-distribution vs. post-distribution) and interaction effects were significant at the .05 level or better on the effort variable and race effects were significant at the .05 level on the satisfaction variable.

The results may be interpreted as follows: On the variable effort, black parents in the pre-distribution sample were significantly less positive than white parents in the pre-distribution sample, but white parents in the post-distribution sample were significantly more positive than black parents in the post-distribution sample. A glance at Table 2 indicates that this pattern is due primarily to the shift among white parents: white parents in the post-distribution sample were more positive about the effort being made in their local schools than were white parents in the sample of respondents interviewed before our brochure on education on the Southeast side had been distributed.

On the variable satisfaction, black parents in the pre-distribution sample were significantly more satisfied with the education their children were receiving in local schools than were white parents in the pre-distribution sample, but black and white parents interviewed after the brochure had been distributed no longer differed on this variable. A glance at Table 2 indicates that this pattern is due primarily to the shift among white parents. Black parents in the post-distribution sample were only slightly more negative than black parents in the pre-distribution sample but white parents in the post-distribution sample were noticeably more satisfied with their children's education than were white parents in the pre-distribution sample.

Thus this analysis of the pre- and post-distribution responses of white and black parents suggests that the brochure may have had a measurable impact on the attitudes of white parents on the Southeast Side. On two of the four attitude variables, namely perceptions of effort being expended by local educators and satisfaction with the schools, our sample of pre-distribution white parents were less favorable toward the schools than black parents, but this was no longer true among our post-distribution sample of parents. This finding further suggests that the material in the brochure may have alleviated some of the fears and dissatisfactions of white parents concerning the steps being taken to maintain adequate education for their children in the changing schools of the Southeast Side. It is possible that before distribution of the brochure, white parents had begun to feel that local educators were not working hard enough to guard against deterioration in their children's education as the schools changed in social composition and more low-achieving students entered Southeast classrooms. Although pre-distribution white parents apparently were not more negative than pre-distribution black parents about the overall quality of educational opportunities on the Southeast side, they were less satisfied than black parents with the educational programs offered to their own children. In part, this pre-distribution difference may reflect the fact that many black parents on the Southeast Side had moved there from predominantly low-income ghetto neighborhoods where the schools were generally ineffective; after moving, they might be expected to be fairly well satisfied, at least for a while, with educational opportunities in their children's new schools, whereas white parents had lived on the Southeast Side a longer time and tended to contrast their local schools with those they had known some years before rather than with ineffective ghetto schools. At any rate, the material in the brochure may have convinced some white parents that local educators indeed were making a vigorous

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[7] J. C. R. Li, Statistical Inference, I & II (Ann Arbor: Edward Brothers, 1964).

effort to maintain educational excellence and that adequate educational opportunities were still available to their children.

Pre-post comparisons for non-parents

Table 3 shows the mean scores of the four groups of non-parents on the two items dealing respectively with quality and effort to which non-parents were asked to respond before and after distribution of the brochure. Inspection of the data in Table 3 indicates that there were no significant positive changes in the attitudes of non-parents before and after distribution of the brochure. The finding that white parents may have become more favorable about the efforts local educators were making to provide good education after the brochure was distributed was not replicated in the case of white non-parents. Respondents in the post-distribution black non-parent sample were, if anything, less favorable on the effort variable than pre-distribution black non-parents, as indicated by the interaction F ratio of 3.73 - just short of significance at the .05 level.[8] However, the failure to attain statistical significance at the .05 level and the small number of respondents (12) available in the post-distribution black non-parent sample caution against concluding that this possible difference among the black non-parent samples is a reliable trend.

Thus we conclude that while the brochure may have had some impact on the attitudes of white parents on the Southeast Side, there is no reason to believe it positively affected the attitudes of white non-parents. (It should be kept in mind that we had data for non-parents on only one of the two variables for which there was evidence of possible positive attitude change among white parents.) Reviewing the pre-post distribution comparisons in both Tables 2 and 3, then, the data suggest that the brochure may have had a measurable impact on the attitudes of white parents but not among black parents or white and black non-parents. If it is assumed that white parents in a racially changing community are likely to be more anxious about local schools than other groups in the community, it can be concluded that a brochure such as the one we produced and distributed on the Southeast side can help to alleviate anxiety and possibly help to maintain confidence in public education among this important group of residents. For residents who presumably are less overtly anxious about the quality of local public schools, however, such a brochure may not be as salient and therefore may have less effect in terms of public attitudes toward local schools. To the extent that resources to conduct school-related public relations campaigns generally are not unlimited, efficiency considerations suggest that a brochure of the kind described in this study should be aimed particularly at white parents and that highest priority be given to saturation distribution of the brochure among this group of residents in the community.

Discussion and Conclusions

The purposes of the project described in this paper were to produce and distribute a brochure designed to maintain public confidence in the public schools of a community undergoing racial and social transition and to determine whether the brochure may have had a discernible impact in achieving this goal. There are many difficulties involved in trying to evaluate the possible impact of a brochure of this type. In addition to research problems encountered in wording interview items to elicit truthful responses,

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[8] With 1 and 189 degrees of freedom in this analysis, an F ratio of 3.80 is required for statistical significance at the .05 level.

training interviewers to obtain comparable responses from sub-groups in a sample, obtaining a sample representative of the larger population from which it is drawn and similar usually unavoidable issues, we faced the particular problems involved in making pre-post field comparisons of attitudes on topics of deep concern to many residents in a changing community.

For example, we obviously had no control over school or community developments on the Southeast side between the pre-distribution interviews and the interviews we conducted following the distribution of the brochure. Without such control, it is impossible to be completely sure that attitude changes among residents in the community are attributable to or even related to the brochure. If attitudes became more positive between the pre- and post-distribution interviews, it is possible that the change was due to factors unrelated to the brochure such as a moderating of racial tension within the schools, an improvement of educational or other public services in the schools or community, or seasonal patterns in attitudes toward education and/or in the types of respondents available to be interviewed at differing times during the year. All we can say is that no complicating developments of this type came to our attention during the period we were actively working in the community to obtain pre- and post-distribution data and that it does not seem probable that a spontaneous change toward more favorable attitudes concerning public education would occur in a changing community like the Southeast side.

In part this difficulty in interpretation would have been somewhat alleviated if it had been possible to 1) obtain sets of pre-distribution and post-distribution interviews at several points in time and thus establish more stable longitudinal baseline data on attitudes in the community and 2) systematically monitor school and community developments on the Southeast side between the initial pre-distribution interviews and the final post-distribution interviews. However, available resources did not permit us to follow this very expensive procedure.

Another major way in which the present study cannot be considered a "true" experiment is that the respondents in the post-distribution sample were not the same individuals as were those in the pre-distribution sample. Although we might have tried to re-interview pre-distribution respondents in order to obtain the post-distribution sample, this procedure not only would have involved an unknown but probably substantial amount of attrition; it also might have biased the study by providing a post-sample of respondents some of whom might have been "cued in" to pay unusual attention to the brochure because a stranger had knocked on their doors to ask them about the schools.[9] For this reason, Campbell and Stanley point out in their manual on research design that longitudinal field studies often are justified in selecting differing pre- and post-subsamples within a larger population, but they also point out that this procedure may result in bias due to changes in the population which occur between pre- and post data collection.[10] Although

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[9] In order to avoid biasing responses in the post-distribution sample, interviewers were instructed specifically not to mention the brochure or to ask respondents if they had read or seen it. Only a handful of the post-distribution respondents made reference to the brochure on their own. Whatever impact the brochure might have had apparently was not of a direct enough nature to cause citizens to mention it spontaneously to an interviewer.

[10] Donald T. Campbell and Julian C. Stanley, Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963), p. 54.

we cannot rule out this possibility in the present study, we have no reason to believe that black or white parents or non-parents with favorable attitudes toward local schools moved in to replace relatively less favorable respondents in these sub-samples to any significant degree between our pre- and post-distribution interivews, and we believe our sub-samples were large enough to reflect trends which might have occurred in most of the sub-samples.[11]

Despite these complicating problems in interpretation, we believe that the results of this study offer definite encouragement regarding the potential of school-related public relations campaigns designed to help stabilize rapidly changing communities by maintaining favorable public attitudes toward the schools. For one thing, the findings of the study are clearly compatible with the hypothesis that in some respects white parents became more favorable toward their local schools after we distributed our brochure, and we are not aware of any specific force other than the brochure which might account for this change. In addition, it is not difficult to see why the attitudes of white parents should be most affected by the brochure, since they presumably constitute the group in the community most fearful that the quality of the schools will deteriorate in the initial stages of racial change. Furthermore, it is reasonable to expect that perceptions of the effort being made to maintain the quality of education in local schools would be the variable most directly influenced by an informational brochure, and this was one of the two variables on which there was evidence of a positive shift in the attitudes of white parents. Except for white parents, furthermore, respondents in our pre-distribution sub-samples tended to believe that local educators were doing as much as they could to maintain good education, and both white and black pre-distribution parents perceived local educators as being concerned about patrons' attitudes,most of the time; thus a ceiling effect was operating which reduced the likelihood that there would be measurable positive shifts on these two variables (effort and concern) except in the case of white parents' perceptions of local educators' effort. Since the brochure emphasized that pupils in the upper third of their classes were continuing to achieve at a high level, it is not surprising to find that white parents may have become less fearful (dissatisfied) that their children's achievement would be harmed by attending a changing school, even though their perceptions of the overall quality of education in the community did not shift in a positive direction.

Admittedly, these are ex post facto speculations concerning the plausibility and therefore the defensibility of our conclusion that the brochure had at least some favorable impact on public attitudes toward education on the Southeast side. But since the conclusion does appear eminently plausible, we believe it is worth the consideration of educators and interested laymen concerned with the general issue of whether school public relations campaigns are worthwhile and the specific issue of whether such campaigns can help to stabilize changing neighborhoods in other communities or other cities. In view of the fact that the professional literature contains hardly any reports of efforts to conduct systematic school public relations campaigns - much less of attempts to evaluate the potential impact of such efforts - the present study may be particularly encouraging for those who believe that school officials should take the initiative in communicating with their publics and in intervening to prevent unjustified public misconceptions

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[11] This was not true in the case of black non-parents, of whom there were only 12 in the post distribution sub-sample. Most of the black residents moving into a community like the Southeast side are young parents with small children; for this reason it proved very difficult to obtain black non-parents for this study.

concerning education in racially changing communities from hastening the ghettorization of our cities.

Certainly a school public relations campaign cannot in and of itself prevent or even slow down the process of resegregation once racial change has begun to occur rapidly. We would not for one minute argue that our brochure succeeded in the goal of bringing about any additional stability on the Southeast side. But had it been distributed in tandem with much larger and more comprehensive efforts at stabilization on the part of public agencies and community organizations, the brochure might very well have made a major contribution to the attainment of this ultimate goal.

APPENDIX A

Post-Distribution Interview Schedule

1. How long have you lived at this address? _____
2. Length of time resident on S. E. Side _____
3. How would you rate the quality of the public schools on the southeast side? (1 - very outstanding; 9 very poor) _____
4. From what you have seen, would you agree that the schools are doing as much as they possibly can to provide a good education for children here?
   Definitely agree Mostly agree Agree some
   Disagree a little Mostly disagree Disagree very much
   Not sure
5. Do you have children attending public elementary or secondary schools: Yes _____ No ____ (pre-schl. ____)
   What grades are they in?
   K____ 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ 6____ 7____ 8____ 9____10____ 11____ 12____
6. On the whole, are you satisfied with the education your children are receiving in the public schools?
   Very pleased Mostly satisfied Not particularly satisfied
   Mostly not satisfied Definitely not satisfied Unsure
7. Do you feel that there are some ways in which your children are not receiving an adequate education _____
   _____
   _____
8. Do you think that teachers and other school officials on the Southeast Side are very much concerned with the thinking and feeling of parents in this area?
   Very much Most of the time Sometimes
   Seldom Hardly ever Don't know or not sure

interviewer only:

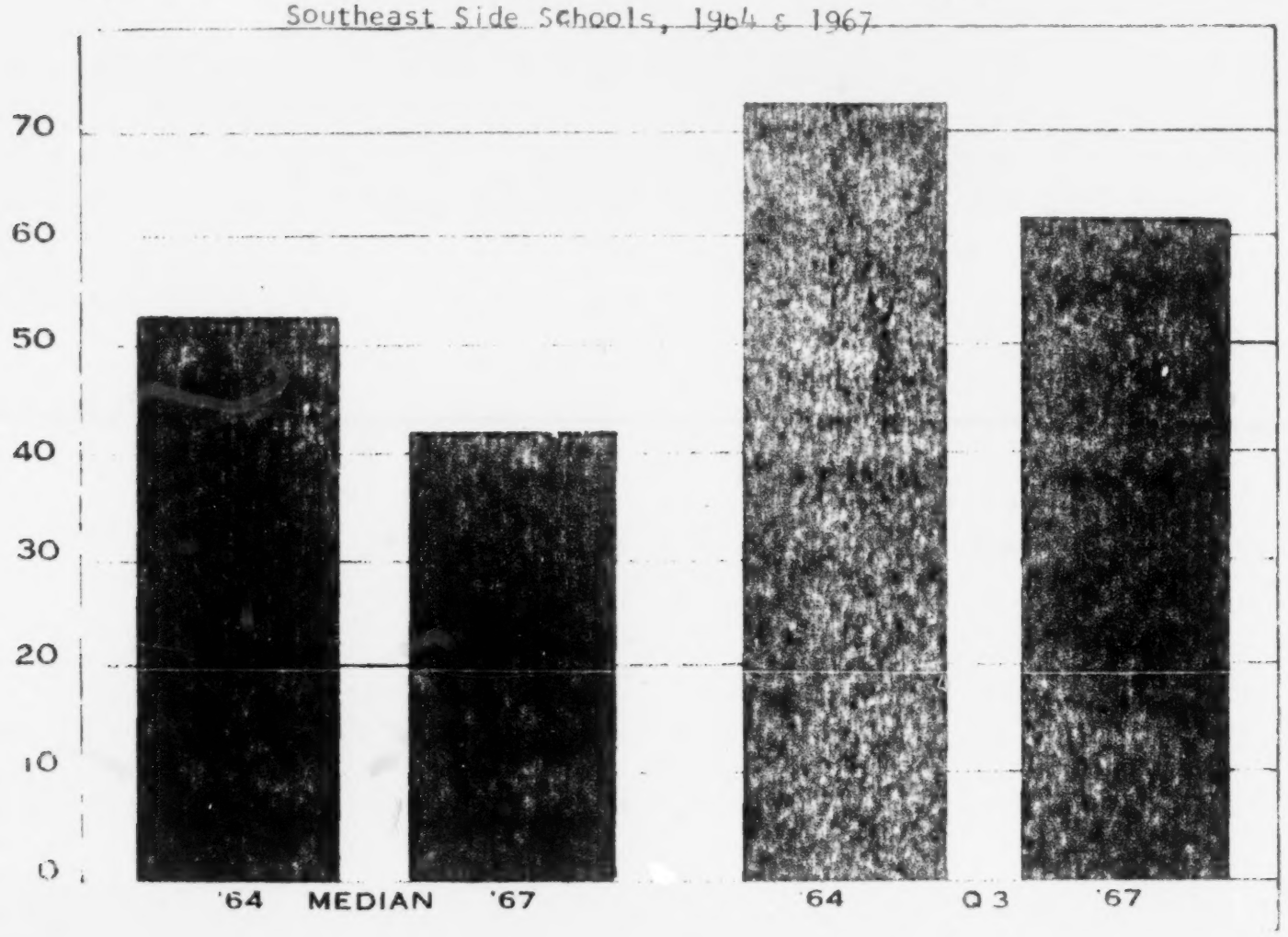
9. Did the respondent refer to the brochure? Yes____ No____
10. If yes, was the reference Positive ____ Neutral ____ Negative ____, as regards the brochure per se?
11. Was the reference as regards the effects of the brochure on the respondent?
    Great Impact ____ Some Impact ____
    Little Impact____ Some Negative Reaction__
    Very Negative Reaction _____
12. Was the reference as regards the effects of the brochure on other people:
    Great Impact ____ Some Impact ____
    Little Impact____ Some Negative Reaction___
    Very Negative Reaction ____
13. Noteworthy comments on the schools _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
14. Noteworthy comments on the brochure _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
15. Noteworthy comments on the community or its people _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

Respondent information age ____ sex ____ race ____ house (1-10) ____
address_____

House 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

FIGURE 1

Brochure Chart on Median and Q 3 Third Grade IQ Scores
Southeast Side Schools, 1964 & 1967



The "median" score represents the achievement of the "average" pupil on the Southeast Side compared to the "average" pupil in tge United States in the same grade. For example, a median of 55 on third grade reading would mean that the average Southeast third grader ranked above 55% of the nation's third graders in reading achievement.

The "Q 3" score represents the score of a relatively high achieving or high ability pupil who scores better than 75% of his fellow pupils. If the Q 3 score of pupils in a given school was at exactly the same level as among pupils in the nation as a whole, the Q 3 score would be 75.

Chart 1 shows that since 1964 there has been a drop in the ability scores of pupils enrolled in the Southeast Side elementary schools. This drop can be attributed to the fact that there were more pupils from low-income families on the Southeast Side in 1967 than in 1964. Pupils from low-income families usually have less experience that would prepare them to do well on an ability test than do pupils from middle-income families and for this reason the ability test scores among a group of pupils from low income families tend to be below average.

FIGURE 2

Brochure Chart on Median and Q 3 Third Grade Reading Scores

Southeast Side Schools, 1964 & 1967

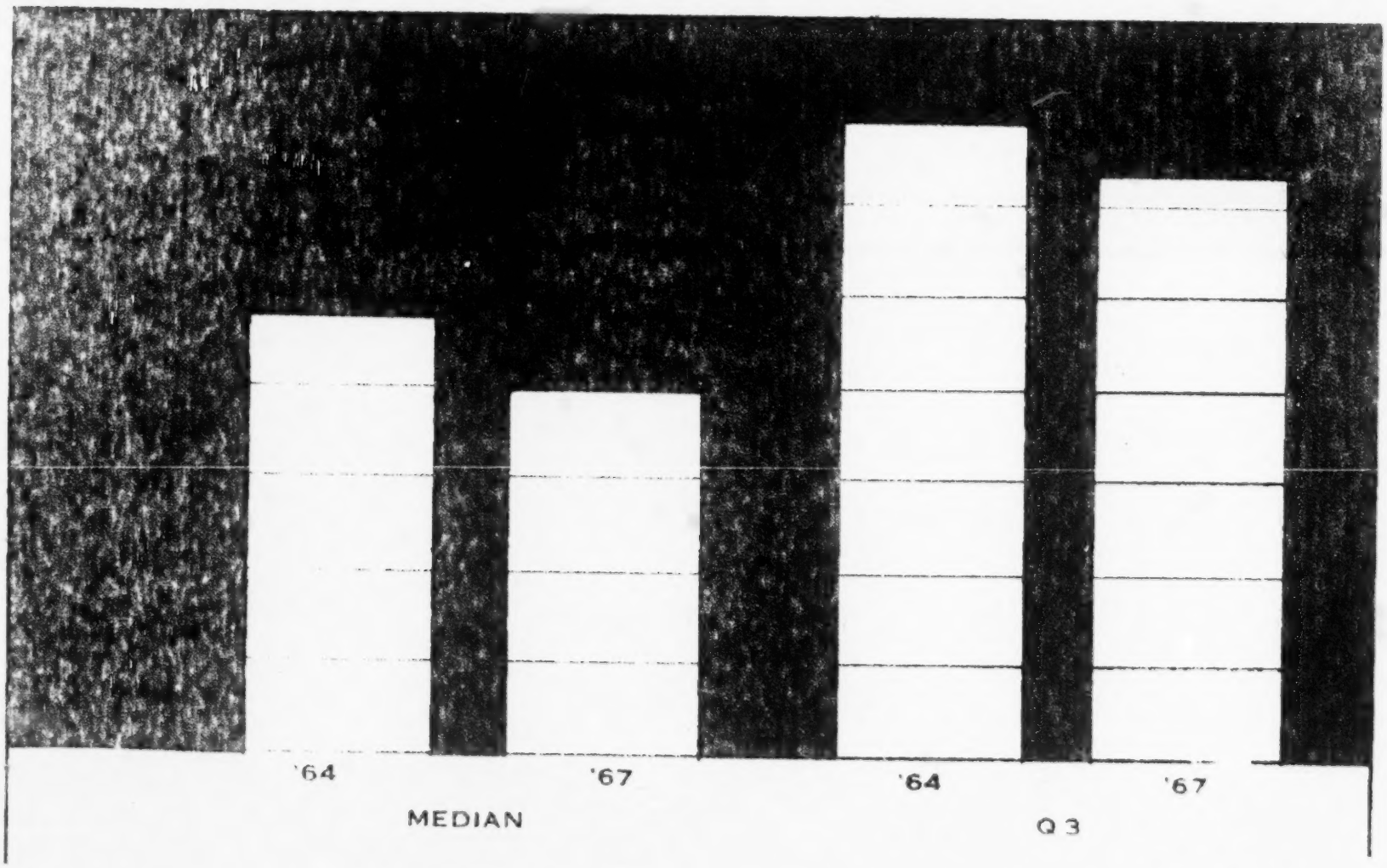


Figure 2 shows the median and Q 3 reading achievement scores for the third grade between 1964 and 1967. As one would expect, given the fact that the ability scores were lower in 1967 than in 1964 or 1965, the achievement scores also fell somewhat during this period of time.

FIGURE 3

Brochure Charts on Third Graders' Achievement in Relation to Ability Scores, Southeast Side Schools, 1964 & 1967

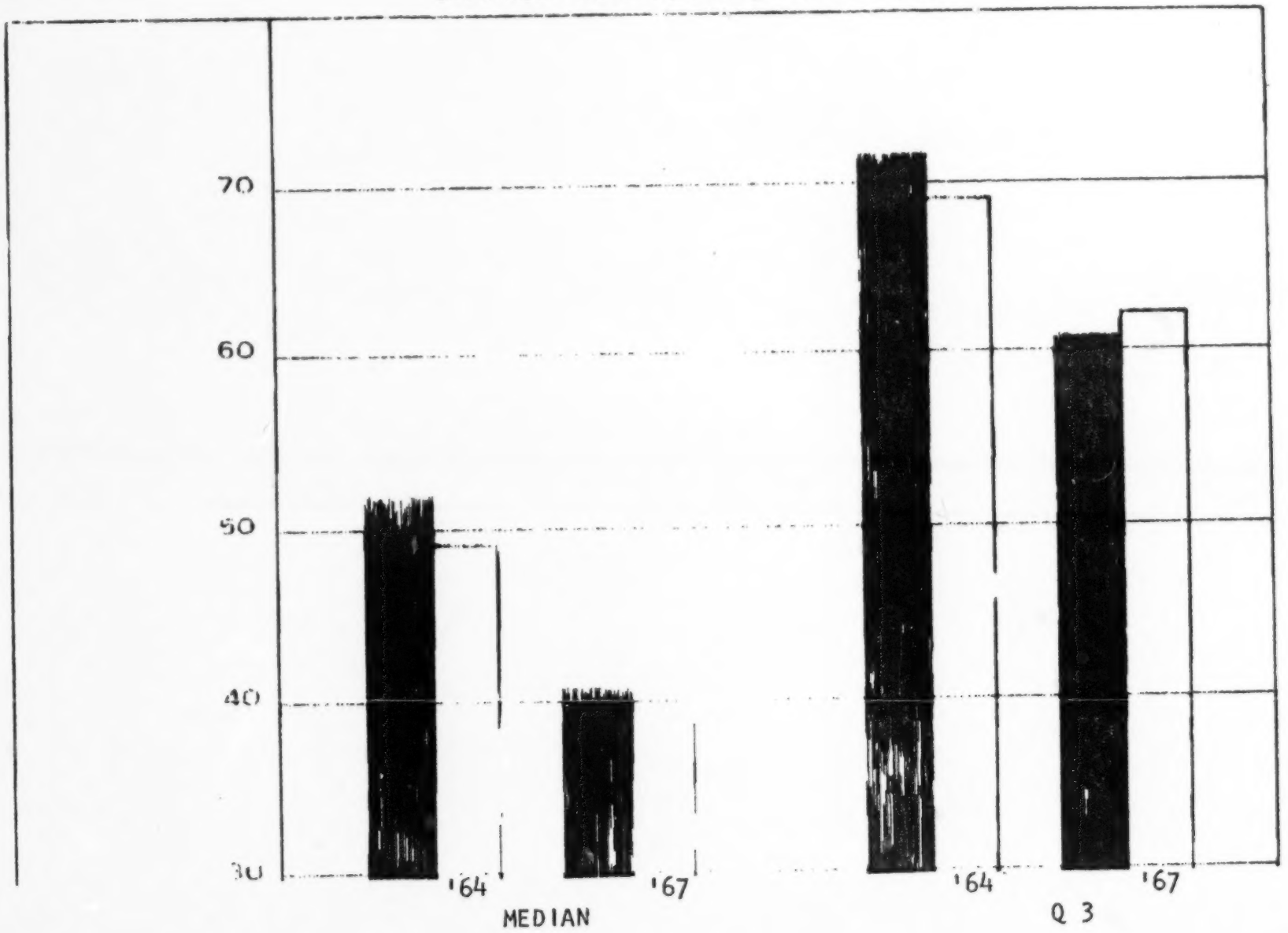


Figure 3 shows achievement in relation to ability in 1964 and 1967. By looking at this chart the reader can see that 1967 students tended to be achieving as well or better in relation to their ability scores as was true in 1964.

This chart also shows that in both 1967 and 1967 the achievement medians and Q 3 scores usually were slightly lower than the ability medians and Q 3 scores. This, too, is a common pattern in schools which have a significant proportion of pupils from low-income families. The reason for this difference is that the previous experience--in school and elsewhere--of children from low-income families prepares them even less well to take achievement tests than to take ability tests.

One of the most noteworthy points suggested in this chart is that pupils who score well on ability tests were continuing to achieve as well or better as was true in previous years. The scores of pupils of medium-to-high ability are represented by the Q 3 scores. Figure 3 shows that in 1967 the reading achievement scores of these pupils were higher in comparison to ability scores than was true in 1964.

Other parts of this pamphlet show that much is being done to improve achievement among pupils on the Southeast Side. As is true in schools everywhere, much more improvement is needed. By supporting their local schools, citizens can help teachers and administrators who are trying to bring about improvements in the achievement of pupils on the Southeast Side. But meanwhile it is good to have these indications that the schools of the Southeast Side are continuing to operate as effectively with an increasingly diversified student population as they did a number of years ago.